

# Over There

*Even the wilderness and desert will rejoice in those days; the desert will blossom with flowers. Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy . . . for the Lord will display His glory there, the excellency of our God. With this news bring cheer to all discouraged ones. Encourage those who are afraid. Tell them, “Be strong, fear not, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies, He’s coming to save you. . . . These, the ransomed of the Lord, will go home along that road to Zion, singing the songs of everlasting joy. For them all sorrow and all sighing will be gone forever; only joy and gladness will be there.”* Isaiah 35:1-4, 10 lb

## **The Understanding**

In spite of my Jewish heritage, it took a trip to Israel in 1974 to turn my life upside down. I had read in the Bible that God promised He would “build up Zion” (Psalm 102:13-16) and that the desert would blossom as a rose, but I never could have imagined the pristine, rebuilt cities that now rise in abundance and the flowers blooming on land Mark Twain called “a moonscape” in 1860. There’s even charm and intrigue found on the dusty streets of East Jerusalem, particularly the quaint Old City of Jerusalem with its many Arab shops not quite caught up to the 21st century. And no matter how many times I take the bus ride up to Jerusalem, the City of the Great King on top the mountain, a lump forms in my throat.

To visibly grasp the authenticity and accuracy of Scripture overwhelmed me with the realization that Israel is a living, beautiful testimony to the fact that God does fulfill His promises. This small strip of land was no longer a place in my head that was “over there,” and I began to understand the meaning of Israel—past, present, and future.

## **The Call**

One evening I broke away from my tour group and sat alone on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The tranquil water was like glass and the sun about to set as I reflected on the living Jesus, His ministry, and what He might be saying to me in modern times. He called out to me that night—not in an audible voice as He had called to His disciples—but I knew in my heart He was asking me to go home and represent His land and His people. He would open the doors for me to write and speak on behalf of a misunderstood nation, to reveal unknown facts to the church so lacking in knowledge, and to remind believers that the New Testament commandment to bring the gospel to the Jew first (Acts 1:16) has not been repealed.

## **The Covenant**

Almost 30 years later, it has saddened me to learn how few people truly get the picture in part or in whole. God is a covenant keeper when it comes to the land and people of Israel; therefore, take heart, Church—He is a covenant keeper to you and me as well! He won’t break His promises. Israel is a living example of that. She may not always deserve His mercy, past or present, but neither does the Christian! God doesn’t just make covenants:

He keeps them! I walked away from His land with that covenant embedded in my heart, soul, and mind.

The devil is not pleased with God's covenant, and it is he who wants to distort the facts with propaganda and historical revisionism\*1 concerning God's land and people. Satan most certainly knows the hour is late, and the events in Israel are "God's time clock" to understanding the end of the age at which time he (Satan) is doomed. Better to keep people in ignorance to the facts concerning this.

The Gentile church owes the Jews a great deal: Our Bible, the prophets, the apostles, the Messiah, and ultimately salvation. For it is written, "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Most Gentile Christians do not understand their Jewish roots of Christianity and thus our debt to Israel. And most do not know how to share the \*See explanations on page 19. Messiah with the Jews, nor do they have a great burden to do so. Through faith in the Messiah (Jesus) both Jew and Gentile now draw equally from the spiritual roots of the Olive Tree, found in Romans 9–11.

Many denominational churches have not only shut out the Jewish people, but have also disinherited them from God's written plan in Scripture. This is due mainly to what is known as Replacement Theology. It simply teaches that Israel is of little importance and the Church is now the center of God's focus. Because of Israel's unbelief in Messiah, she has been cut off by God as His chosen and replaced by the Christian church.

I believe many churches don't comprehend that the most significant sign of Christ's soon return is the miraculous restoration of a nation the size of New Jersey: Israel. Her size alone makes Israel easy to ignore; thanks to kings, pharaohs, fuehrers, and radical Muslims, the worldwide Jewish population has shrunk to about 14 million.

Jesus said in Matthew 24 that a characteristic of the last days would be men's hearts failing them for fear (Luke 21:26). It is the hope of Muslim extremists (not your average Muslim!) that they can instill terror and fear into the hearts of the two earthly Satans: America, the "Great Satan," and Israel, the "Little Satan," titles given to America and Israel respectively by the late Ayatollah Khoumeini of Iran in 1979. We are now equal targets, but please be clear about one thing: The ultimate target is the God we represent.

It is not just radical Islam that has aligned itself against Israel (and the God of Israel) and the Christian. A basically godless world feels that if the Jews actually belonged in Israel, it might mean that the Bible has some legitimacy! Thus Satan has aligned a host of enemies to bring down Israel—from the United Nations, to the European Union, to the Communist bloc, to the Arab world including Yasser Arafat, and even the World and National Council of Churches.

They have bought into distortion, propaganda, and historical revisionism. They have sided with Yasser Arafat, the world's foremost terrorist, and bought into the revisionism that there once was a Palestinian state and homeland; these groups believe there is now a dispossessed Palestinian people, and that the Israelis have aggressively taken over the land by force. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact is that there has never been a nation of Palestine with a Palestinian government at any period in history. There is no Palestinian language, no distinct culture, and no distinguishing Palestinian characteristics. Palestinians are Arabs and are no different from Jordanians, Iraqis, Saudis, etc. The term “Palestine” was invented by the Roman Emperor Hadrian in 135 a.d. after he destroyed Jerusalem during a campaign to put down a Jewish uprising. He hated the Jews and wanted to de-Judaize Israel and changed its name from Israel to Palestine, which comes from the word Philistine, a reference to the pagan, ancient Canaanites. He knew it would be a terrible offense to the Jews. The term “Palestine” has hung around for centuries, in fact until today.\*\*

There has always been a Jewish presence in the land since the time of Abraham. Before Abraham there were no Jews, as Abraham was the first Jew. The land was permanently given to the descendants of Isaac (Gen. 17:19), not Ishmael. It is true that the descendants of Ishmael, or the Arabs, have had a presence in that land as well as the Crusaders, the Ottoman Turks, and even the British. But those who would twist history pay no attention to the Bible: He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, “to you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance” (Psalm 105:9-11 NKJ). This covenant had nothing to do with their belief or unbelief. It was an unconditional gift from God.

### **The Rebirth of Israel**

Following WWII in the mid-1940s, the United Nations, led by U.S. President Harry Truman and a worldwide sympathetic backlash due to the Holocaust, said Israel should become a reborn nation in 1948. The British owned Palestine at that time, and they offered many of these pitiful Holocaust refugees a sizable portion of land (to be renamed Israel) including all of Jerusalem. The United Nations formed Transjordan, now Jordan, as a homeland for any Arabs being displaced by the new Jewish state.

The Arab world, however, could not stand the stench of a reborn State of Israel even though she made up but 1/6 of 1% of the Arab world. The day after the new nation was born, the Arabs declared war on Israel. She fought to keep a portion of her land, but to be left alone, Israel surrendered parts of the land the British had given her in 1948. This included half of Jerusalem—the section where the sacred Western or Wailing Wall stands. In other words, the holiest ground on earth to a Jew was given away—all in the name of peace.

It was not the government of Israel that told the Arabs in Palestine to flee, but rather the Arab empire, made up of 22 Arab nations. The Jews had invited the Arabs to stay. The Arab nations promised the Palestinians who fled “for their own protection” that they could soon move back once the Jews in Israel were annihilated, for they wanted to finish what Hitler had started. So in fear, hundreds of thousands of Arabs who lived in the area fled in 1948 and again in 1967. They feared the commands of their Arab leaders, and also the lies they were told about Israel’s brutality.

Together, with cooperation from the United Nations, the Arab world put these fleeing Palestinians into filthy, poverty-stricken refugee camps where they remain today, still maintained by the United Nations. They are used as political pawns and become the suicide bombers we are now familiar with. Those Arabs who stayed in Israel became Israeli citizens and are exempt from the army so they need not fight fellow Arabs. Some even became members of parliament. Most who chose to remain in the new Jewish state have maintained a high standard of living. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of Jews fled Arab nations with only the clothes on their backs.

So, today, who is a “Palestinian”? In 1964, Yasser Arafat, an Egyptian, took the terms “Palestine” and “Palestinian” to refer to the Arab claim to the land of Israel. A Palestinian became anyone Yasser Arafat said was a Palestinian after 1964. At that time, tens of thousands of Arab Christians fled Israel because of Arafat and associates’ persecution of them for leaving the Muslim faith. When a Jew comes to faith in Jesus, he may lose his family; when a Muslim comes to faith in Jesus, he may lose his life. Keep in mind that a “Palestinian State” has been offered to Yasser Arafat on numerous occasions. But he does not want to live side by side with Israel. Instead, as Hitler wanted Germany to be purified of the Jews, so Arafat wants Israel to be Judenrein—purified and totally free of Jews—that is, annihilated. It is in the Palestinian Charter to this day, in spite of years of “peace talks.”

### **Why Should We Care?**

As I write this in the summer of 2002, I have just passed a newsstand displaying seven local and national newspapers. Every one of them features the beleaguered, lonely, and virtually abandoned nation, Israel, in their headlines. Now voices everywhere are asking me what it all means; some of those are the same voices that paid little or no attention to the headlines years ago.

The terrorist attack on America of September 11 plays a major role in this new quest for understanding. Now the enemy of Israel and America is the same: Radical Islam and its factions. Before 9/11, almost all turmoil was “over there.” “Over there” was anywhere; it didn’t have to be the Middle East. It was just faraway places filled with peril or natural disaster, terror, famine, etc., but it was a “safe” distance away. Not anymore.

A peculiar kind of thinking, I know, but even as Bible-believing Christians we can fall into this kind of self-focused thinking. Israel is 8,000 miles away . . . many time zones . . . many hours. When innocent civilians including infants, teens, and grandmothers are literally vaporized in suicide attacks, it might be worth a wince from Americans, but that’s about it. We cannot comprehend that the parents of these radical Islamic extremists are proud of what their suicide/homicide bomber children have done.

So now Middle East-related issues are on our shores! Radical Islam has attacked us, and threatens an ongoing war because of the conflict that goes all the way back to Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. The ghost of Hagar wants to haunt and even destroy America.<sup>4</sup> If the oil-rich Arab world wants to shut off the oil spigots and cause prices to soar, the entire

Western world's economy will destabilize. We can no longer label a Mideast-based conflict as one which affects things that are "over there."

The Bible says there will be a massive turning against Israel by all nations of the world in the latter days (Zech. 12:3). What do you suppose will cause this? I'll tell you what I think—that radical, extremist Muslims will strike again . . . and again at the Western world, and they will curse America partly for our policy of standing by Israel. All nations, including America, will pull back on support of Israel to fulfill this prophecy. You might want to decide which side you are on. It is never popular to be on God's side, and Israel is visible proof of God on earth. Her restoration is the miracle prophesied in the Bible.

### **The Time Clock**

How late is the hour? No one knows exactly, not even Jesus according to the Bible. By watching the signs, the primary one being Israel, another the gospel reaching every people and nation, it is pretty easy to conclude that it is late. As I said, however, the devil knows this. The Bible talks about the "times of the Gentiles" and the "times of the Jews." Scripture tells us that the "times of the Gentiles," or Gentile significance and salvation, would begin to wind down when "Jerusalem was no longer trampled under the foot of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). That transition began in 1967 when the Jews recaptured Jerusalem (which she is now being asked to give up) in the Six Day War. Many credible prophetic teachers believe God shifted some gears in the heavenlies at that time, and that we are in a transition period between the "times of the Gentiles" and the "times of the Jews."

A Jewish remnant has always come to a saving knowledge of the Messiah, but beginning with this transition point, 1967, the remnant has grown exponentially! Jews are coming to know the Messiah—Jesus as Savior—like never before. They will be the true evangelists during the time of the Tribulation (Revelation 7), and they are being prepared even now. But the Bible says they will first be restored to their homeland in unbelief (Ezekiel 37).

Satan wants to prevent Jesus' return at all costs! To do this, he must silence Israel, turn the world against the Jews, and exterminate them. In the end, the devil is doomed to miserable failure—Jesus is the ultimate victor! Satan will be destroyed and tossed into the lake of fire and I sincerely hope CNN or Fox News is there to capture it all! The throne of the King of kings and Lord of lords will be in Jerusalem. The Lord shall be king over all the earth from Jerusalem; in that day shall there be one Lord and His Name one. (Zech. 14:9 KJV). And you and I will be ruling and reigning with the Lord for 1,000 years from the land that is "over there." We will be forever worshiping the King of the Jews and the Savior of all mankind.

Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus!

**\*\*“Myths and Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict” by Mitchell G. Bard.**

For a broader understanding of the history of Israel, read Joan Peters’ book “From Time Immemorial.” This classic was written by a woman who wanted to denounce the very existence of modern-day Israel, but when researching the book came to the conclusion that the Jews do, indeed, have a right to the land and have been the victims of classic historical revisionism by an Israel-hating world.

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You can find some of Jan’s books in the North Heights Maranatha Book and Gift Store.